

John M. Steiner collection
Interviews with former members of the SS, other Nazi officials, and witnesses to Nazi Germany
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The following is a draft English-language summary of an interview in German from the John M. Steiner collection. The translation has been not been verified for accuracy, and therefore, may contain errors. Nothing should be quoted or used from this summary without first checking it against the taped interview. Moreover, the description of events in the summary may not match the sequence, time-code, or track number of the audio files.

Interviews with Günter d'Alquen, Editor-in-Chief of the SS weekly, *Das Schwarze Korps* (The Black Corps) the official newspaper of the *Schutzstaffel* (SS), and commander of the *SS-Standarte Kurt Eggers*

Recorded on June 28, 1977 and March 12, 1982

Earlier recording is of very poor quality.

A rambling discussion that focuses on whether society can afford to tolerate ambiguity or adhere rigidly to dogma and ideology; the importance of mutual understanding and dialogue; whether it was right to carry out misguided orders, even if they were issued by the Führer; whether it was cowardly not to fight in order to prevent massacres; whether there is still a consensual morality or whether nuclear war is prevented only through a system of checks and balances; whether man is, a priori, egotistical, a beast.

1-4-1

(Tape starts in the middle of conversation)

He talks about his work as editor of the paper and about his staff. It was not possible to object to policies. The editorials emphasized the positive aspects of National Socialism.

Says that one can understand what happened if one understands Hitler and the emotional impact he had on the population. He compares it to the Catholic Church which conquered the world with threats.

Tells about his own involvement in National Socialism which started already in 1926.

Steiner quotes from a book that analyses National Socialism, Hitler, anti-Semitism and its consequences. Alquen responds saying that the Jews were leaders in communism. Between 1933-39 no other country wanted to take them in, that's why they died.

1-4-2

Steiner mentions that he has a copy of the paper that describes the transport of the Jews of Berlin. Alquen answers that a secretary in his Editorial building saw how Jews were beaten and told the editor. He was appalled and called the Stormfuhrer who said that it put the uniform to shame.

There was a trial. Himmler wanted things done properly. Says that the saddest thing in German history was that the excuse was always that an order had to be followed. He told Himmler many times about things that were happening, that he objected to in principle. His paper was not a propaganda organ for the SS or National Socialism. He was pressured about what should be in leading articles, and had difficulty publishing what he believed was the truth. Talks about his relationship with Himmler.

1-5

Alquen talks about his life and development. He was first a member of the SA, and then as a student in Berlin he joined the SS. His father objected to it. He later went to Bremen and started a newspaper, and then in Munich he became senior editor. Describes travelling with Hitler and Hitler's impact on people. In 1932, he made contact with Himmler. Talks about General Steiner who did not believe in totalitarian power but thought that Hitler was a prophet of a new Europe.

In 1932, Heydrich came to his editorial office and asked him for the support of the newspaper.

1-6

(Difficult to understand)

In November he went towards Moscow and was shocked seeing all the dead bodies.

1-7

(Inaudible)

1-8-1

In 1942 he was very upset about the plans and perception of the war with Russia. (Inaudible)

1-8-2

(Inaudible on and off)

Talks about Bjornson (?) and the development of the resistance movement. In 1948 he was at a high court hearing in New York.

1-9-1

Talks about a British soldier who was shot down over Germany and who asked to work for them. He objected to the Marxist politics in England and wanted to fight against it. He became a courier, and held a very important job. At the end of the war he was offered to escape to Switzerland but refused. He was taken prisoner by the Americans and stood trial in London.

He tells that they always recruited locals for the paper in occupied territories.

In Norway, they got three people from Ireland to work for them. Monty was tried in New York after the war for helping the Germans.

Talks about the psychological warfare. There was only one German who crossed over. He describes how they took over the media in Holland and Denmark with help of locals.

Talks about his meeting with General Bittrich and their discussion about the disaster in Russia.

Later he was taken prisoner and was in jail in Scotland. Describes his experience with denazification.

1-9-2

Continues to talk about his imprisonment. One of his punishments was that he was not allowed to work in journalism for 10 years.

Describes General Steiner, his personality and action.

Explains why he did not know about the camps.

1-10

(Tape starts in middle)

Mentions people he had contact with, Bittrich, Kurt Meyer, Benoit.

He states that he thinks that General Steiner should have committed suicide because of the situation at the Russian front. Heavy discussion with the interviewer who said that it was more important to save lives. Alquen states that the bombing of Dresden was supposedly to save lives. Discussion with Steiner about following orders blindly or using one's judgment.

1-14-1

(tapes starts in middle)

He mentions a book by Lei (?) on how to raise a National Socialist. One can understand what happened only if one understands the emotional impact Hitler had and not just the intellectual aspect.

He tells how he joined the party in 1926 as a student. Hitler rightfully got the majority vote. Nobody read "Mein Kampf" after 1933. Discusses political writings.

1-14-2

He talks about an American friend, a writer, who interviewed him in prison in Scotland and later in the US. Describes seeing a Jewish pawn shop in New York selling the Iron Cross, and how upset he was. Steiner quotes an article about blacks "Schwarze" which was similar to anti-Jewish propaganda articles in Berlin.

1-15-1

He talks about the problem with the reliability of the sources of information. There is a lot of false information about sadism. Mentions that the story of Anne Frank is based on falsified papers. Talks about the Hornbach (?) document that states that the victor writes the documents.

Talks about the Russian NKVD and Pravda- there exists a dictatorship of the owners of resources. American papers are missing, and many papers were sorted out and missing. He will write about it in the future. He wants to know the truth, were 6 million killed or only 2?

1-15-2

Steiner and Alquen discuss "Mein Kampf". The Russians did not read it and neither did the Germans and the Jews. Alquen talks about Hitler's source of power and influence. Talks about a book that influenced him, and made him realize that the end justifies the means, and that the war had to be won. The young generation of Germans were anti-Weimar and also anti-Communist. Hitler was instrumental in preventing a civil war between National Socialists and Communists in 1932.

Talks about his experiences during the war in 1941. The retreat from the front, the terrible snow and the horror of seeing all the dead bodies.

1-16-1

(tape starts in the middle)

In 1938 he volunteered to the Panzer division. Describes his experiences in the army and brutality of some of the commanders. Talks about the role of Rommel and his relationship with Hitler. The propaganda war used in Africa. Describes his various army experiences, and some of the cruel practices used on the soldiers.

1-16-2

(Tape starts in middle of conversation)

Alquen talks about Bjornsten, head of commando in Copenhagen in 1948. Talks about going to the USA to testify and being warned that the people there are worse than the mafia. He was offered to stay in the US but declined.

Talks about the problem of the German rearmament in the 50's. One idea was to have a German volunteer army under American command. He explains why that was unthinkable.

He had stopped working in the 1950s and General Kurt Meyer (ph) told him that he was missing his work. The Heiyak (ph) paper helped prevent terrorist activities by SS in the 50's.

A British officer told him that the commander of Belsen was a decent person and a wonderful man. He just worked for the government. In 1945, 46 people were like brave children obeying their father. There are many documents about the Waffen SS, but some of the sources are suspect.

1-17

(Tape starts in middle of sentence)

He says that he has no regrets. That he had a rich life experience. After the war he worked in the textile business. Talks about his business and his son. Tells of incidents when he was provoked and challenged about his past/

He was denazified first in Munich and then again in Berlin. He lost his house and a great deal of money. The courts in Berlin did not do him justice and he is angry. He feels good when people happen to recognize him and thank him for his work in the past.

Talks about helping General Lamardin (ph) write the truth about what happened in Alsace and helped him to defend himself against improvable accusations.

1-18-1

(Starts in middle of sentence)

In January 1940 he was sent to Oranienburg to have a motor vehicle repaired. Describes his impressions of the camp. He saw men in striped suits working. They were 25-35 years old and did not look under-nourished. He was told that they were incarcerated for various crimes. He felt that they deserved what they got and they had it better than the poor soldiers at the front who suffered terribly.

When Steiner (interviewer) asked him about Kristallnacht he said that those who survived had it better than young Germans who had to go to the front. Jews had to have their passports marked with a J and wear a yellow star because potential enemies of the state had to be clearly marked.

He gives various reasons and explanations for the world wide anti-Semitism that goes back to the inquisition in Spain. Jews could leave until 1938 but chose not to. With regard to the camps he that the Americans did the same with the Japanese in the USA.

1-18-2

(Starts in middle of sentence)

He believes that the plans for Madagascar were real and sincere and not an attempt to fool.

Talks about a video he saw about people mutilated by gas chambers. Tells of medical experiments on 60,000 convicted criminals that involved gas burning. Many died of their burns.

Today he is horrified by it but back then he would have felt that the end justified the means. He feels that it is of utmost importance to understand that events are judged differently at different times. Steiner (interviewer) replied that this was exactly what he is studying and trying to understand. He studied what happened in Vietnam and Korea with the same idea.

Alquen is angry at people who sit in judgment of others without knowledge and understanding. The Nuremberg Trials were based on hatred and lies. He is very pessimistic about the future and feels that the world is heading towards disaster.